

WHAT WE CLAIM IS:

1. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image of a first object using images obtained of said first object, the method including the steps of;
 - (i) obtaining a plurality of images of a first object from multiple positions about a substantially horizontal plane, and
 - (ii) creating foreground and background layers of the first object within said image, and
 - (iii) forming a 3-dimensional image of said first object from the images obtained, and
 - (iv) converting said 3-dimensional image obtained into a desirable format for compositing purposes.
2. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image as claimed in claim 2, where the first object is a hair style prepared on a model head.
3. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image as claimed in any one of claims 1 or 2, wherein background layer image content is extrapolated using a reflected copy of an opposed image.
4. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image as claimed in any one of claims 2 or 3, wherein the creation of foreground and background layers is completed through executing the steps of;
 - (a) cropping the hair out of each image, and

- (b) loading the cropped hair images into an alignment process, and
 - (c) defining foreground and background hair layers within each image.
5. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image as claimed in claim 4, wherein said method of creating foreground and background layers includes the following subsequent step of;
- (d) animating said plurality of images to identify alignment inconsistencies between images.
6. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image as claimed in any one of claims 4 or 5, wherein hair layers are defined by following perspective lines in the hair style.
7. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image as claimed in any one of claims 4 to 6, wherein the hair style to be represented is feathered to obtain a smooth transition between the layers defined.
8. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image as claimed in any previous claim, wherein an alpha-blending process is applied to a foreground layer of an image.
9. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image as claimed in any previous claim, wherein the images converted into a format desirable for compositing are stored in an electronic file format which stores a plurality of sequential images from a common layer within a single file.
10. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image as claimed in claim 9, wherein the file format selected stores uncompressed pixel data.

11. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image as claimed in claims 9 or 10, wherein a file is stored for each layer present in the 3-dimensional image of the first object.
12. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image of a second object, characterized by the steps of;
 - A. obtaining at least one image of a second object, and
 - B. creating an approximate 3-dimensional image of the second object, and
 - C. converting the 3-dimensional image obtained into a desirable format for compositing purposes.
13. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image of a second object as claimed in claim 12, wherein at least two images are obtained of said second object.
14. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image of a second object as claimed in any one of claims 12 or 13, wherein the second object includes a face.
15. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image of a second object as claimed in any one of claims 12 to 14, wherein an electronic model of said second object is created from said at least one image initially obtained of the second object.
16. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image of a second object as claimed in claim 15, wherein the 3-dimensional image of the second object is created from the electronic 3-dimensional model of said second object.

17. A method of forming an approximation of a 3-dimensional image of a second object as claimed in claim 16, wherein a rendering software application is used with the electronic 3-dimensional model to generate a plurality of images complimentary to images obtained of a first object as claimed in claim 1.
18. A method of compositing multiple images to form an approximation of a 3-dimensional image, said method being characterized by the execution of the steps of;
 - a. obtaining a 3-dimensional image of a first object converted into a desirable format as claimed in claim 1, and
 - b. obtaining a 3-dimensional image of a second object in a desirable format as claimed in claim 14, and
 - c. combining each of the corresponding pixels of the images of the first and second objects.
19. A method of compositing multiple images as claimed in claim 18, wherein the resulting composite 3-dimensional image is delivered to a remote user using a client software application via a computer network and a server software application.
20. A method of compositing multiple images as claimed in any one of claims 18 or 19, wherein the composite 3-dimensional image is generated by a server software application and transmitted to a remote client software application.
21. A method of compositing multiple images as claimed in any one of claims 18 to 20, wherein the server software application is adapted to execute the steps of;

- a. retrieving a 3-dimensional image of a hair style as claimed in claim 2, and retrieving a 3-dimensional image of a face as claimed in claim 14;
 - b. taking an initial pixel from the foreground hair layer image, an initial corresponding pixel from a face image and an initial corresponding pixel from a background hair layer image and combining them;
 - c. repeating step b. for all subsequent pixels of the corresponding image of the hair style and the corresponding image of the face.
22. A method of compositing multiple images as claimed in claim 21, wherein the server software application is adapted to execute the steps of;
- d. compressing the resultant composite image and transmitting it to a user, and
 - e. repeating steps b. to d. for all subsequent images of the hair style and the face.
23. A method of compositing multiple images as claimed in claim 21, wherein the server software application is adapted to execute the further subsequent steps of;
- d. storing of the resultant composite image for compilation into an animated format, and
 - e. repeating steps b. to d. for all subsequent images of the hair style and the face.
24. A 3-dimensional image generation system substantially as herein described with reference to and as illustrated by the accompanying drawings and/or examples.

25. A method of generating a 3-dimensional image substantially as herein described with reference to and as illustrated by the accompanying drawings and/or examples.